

An Emergency
Involving the Holy Sepulchre
And Other
Sacred Places in the Holy Land



A Statement

by the

American Committee on Preservation of the
Sacred Places in the Holy Land

Chairmen

Rt. Rev. William T. Manning Rev. Charles S. Macfarland

To the Churches and Public of America :

There is no spot in the world which is so significant to Christendom and around which cluster so many precious memories as the Holy Land,—Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Olivet,—the Sacred Places in the life of Jesus Christ our Lord. It was there that was enacted the world's greatest event in the sacrificial death of the world's Saviour. This transcendent fact of history is central in the faith of every branch of the Christian Church. Anything which threatens the proper care of the Sacred Places will therefore challenge the attention and loyalty of Christians throughout the world.

These sites in Palestine have been protected, cherished and cared for from time immemorial by the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which goes back for its inception to the Bishopric of Jerusalem under James, "the Lord's brother." Its faithful guardianship of these places during the centuries of the early church, the Dark Ages, the Crusades, and down to the present time puts the Church Universal under an obligation which Christians should gladly discharge.

As a direct result of the World War and the Russian Revolution this ancient historic Church is now facing a crisis which threatens its very existence. The abundant revenues from Russia have been cut off. The streams of pilgrims and their generous gifts have ceased. The fall in the rate of exchange and the impracticability of discontinuing entirely its extensive religious, educational, charitable and medical activities have added to the financial problem of the Patriarchate.

Owing to this critical financial situation facing the venerable historic Eastern Church, which is recognized as a branch of the Holy Church throughout the world,

an American Committee has been formed for the purpose of enlisting the aid of the Christian people of the United States, of Canada, and elsewhere, in the safeguarding and maintenance of these Sacred Places. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, realizing that the time has come when the younger sister Churches of the West must share with the ancient Eastern Orthodox Church the responsibilities in the Holy Land, has consented to the formation of the American Committee, and welcomes its co-operation.

The present committee has been formed to be as nearly representative as practicable of the Christian people in America. It is the intention, as requested by the Patriarchate, to form a permanent American Commission on the Preservation of the Sacred Places in the Holy Land, which shall control the funds raised in this country, using them for the purpose of meeting the existing financial obligations of the Patriarchate. The commission will further co-operate with the Patriarchate in devising new plans for the administration of its business affairs, and also in providing against a recurrence of the present difficulties. The permanent American commission will attempt, moreover, to unify all the movements whose common purpose is to preserve the Sacred Places of the Holy Land from neglect, exclusion or exploitation. It is understood that, with the consent of the Patriarchate, the Commission will endeavor to separate from the general problem of financing the Patriarchate the question of the care of the Holy Places, and that in the oversight of this work representatives of American Churches shall have a share.

During the period of the war and thereafter the Patriarchate found it necessary to borrow heavily to carry on its activities, in some instances being obliged to pay interest as high as thirty percent. In the hope that some

means might be found for alleviating the situation the British Government, holding the Mandate for Palestine, declared a special moratorium on its obligations, and appointed a commission, whose report has been published and is available. This commission is now working with the Patriarchate in an effort to furnish temporary relief, and any commission of the Western Churches will have the advantage of the help from this British commission. The entire project has the hearty endorsement of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, whose plenipotentiary representative, Archbishop Panteleimon, is now in this country and is aiding in every way possible the American committee. It is also endorsed by the Rt. Rev. Rennie MacInness, Bishop of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem.

The first and specific task which the American Committee is undertaking is to secure funds from the various church bodies and from individual Christians who recognize their obligation to the Patriarchate for its age-old guardianship of these Sacred Places. We feel that an appeal for Two Million Dollars with which to eliminate the present situation created by the War is warranted because of the fact that the Sacred Places may pass out of the custodianship of the Patriarchate which received it from James the Apostle. This custodianship should be protected when necessary by the Churches and Christians of the West, representing Christianity as a whole. On the other hand if relieved of its present obligations the regular income of the Patriarchate which now goes to pay interest, should be sufficient for the proper maintenance of the Sacred Places. For years these places have been the object of envious desire on the part of many. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem has been faithful to its trust. In the day of its adversity it should be helped to pass safely through the crisis.

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